

**Minutes of the Montpelier City Council Meeting  
January 2, 2013, 6:30 PM  
City Council Chambers, Montpelier City Hall**

In attendance: Mayor John Hollar (presiding), City Manager Bill Fraser, City Councilors Andy Hooper, Angela Timpone, Thierry Guerlain, Alan Weiss, Anne Watson, and Tom Golonka. City Clerk John Odum acted as Secretary of the Meeting.

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The Mayor called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

13-002. The City Clerk noted that the previous meeting's minutes were not available, as an edit needed to be made. Councilor Hooper moved approval for the remaining items on the Consent agenda and Councilor Timpone seconded. The motion passed unanimously and without discussion at 6:31 PM.

13-003. City Manager Fraser reviewed the pending city citizen survey, using the previous survey in 2009 as an example. Councilor Weiss spoke positively about the past surveys. Councilor Timpone asked questions to ascertain the purpose and functionality of the survey.

Councilor Guerlain asked about the relationship with Berlin in regards to the sewer system, and how their payments relate to the infrastructure maintenance.

Police Chief Anthony Facos briefed the Council on the proposed FY13 budget. He addressed the challenges of the proposed staff reduction, particularly in relation to special events. He also spoke about the proposed changes in parking permit and lot rates which would bring the parking portion of the budget out of the red.

Councilor Weiss has questions about how the School Resource Officer position is funded. He also questioned the workload and budget for the position, given the school calendar.

The City Manager responded that half the budget for the position is billed to the school – and that it is a negotiated amount, in the context of their other budget challenges. He also expressed his view that the position supports the school and the greater community. Finally, he noted that the incoming Resource Officer was of the same rank as the outgoing one.

Chief Facos added details on the partnership with the school district, as well as the specific expertise of the incoming officer. He also advocated for keeping the current funding relationship to firmly establish the officer as a Police employee who answers to the Police Department, rather than the school. Facos added that he felt an SRO was appropriate and necessary for a community like Montpelier.

Councilor Weiss asked whether the current SRO would stay on in a contract capacity, and Facos indicated there would be some overlap – restating his opinion that a 16-officer force was not ideal, but that the force was adapting.

Councilor Guerlain asked if there were other personnel resources available for special events. Chief Facos indicated there weren't, but made a note of the expertise and experience within the department on such events.

On the Parks budget, the City Manager noted that the only change was to craft a caretaker for the house in Hubbard Park, as Geoff Beyer was moving out of the house. The budget envisions renting the house, while paying a salary for a caretaker living on site.

Councilor Guerlain wondered whether police department staffing could be modified to provide more coverage for parking patrols between 4 and 5 PM.

The Mayor noted that the next meeting was a public hearing and invited Councilors to place any major proposed budget changes on the table with that in mind. Councilor Weiss took a moment to discuss the mission of Montpelier Alive and the budget monies and office space used to support the organization. He characterized the focus of Montpelier Alive as too narrow in scope, in terms of area. The Mayor responded that the meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> would be an appropriate venue to raise the discussion, and that Montpelier Alive representatives would be in attendance. City Manager Fraser offered details on the geographic range served by Montpelier Alive as relating to the city's official downtown designation.

Councilor Guerlain asked about the responsibility of the City Council for the other budgets which appear before the voters (the Schools and the Recreation Department). City Manager Fraser and Mayor Hollar responded that the roles were distinct, and that there was little to be gained by the Council putting time and energy into the matter.

Councilor Timpone noted that voters keep approving budgets, and that this was evidence that there wasn't broad dissatisfaction with the overall budgets, as some suggest. She further suggested that the distinct budgets and budgetary perspectives between these differing entities was a structural quality of the city.

Mayor Hollar suggested that increasing communication between the city and the school prior to crafting budgets in the future would be prudent, so that the Council could take school cost increases into consideration when it crafts the municipal budget. The City Manager reflected that the two budgets had been more closely rolled out in previous years. Councilor Watson suggested it would be useful to see combined recent budgetary trends.

Finance Director Sandra Gallup directed the Council's attention to data presented in the budget books that compares the recent growth in the school and municipal budgets. Councilor Guerlain expressed concern over the

increasing tax bills. When Councilor Timpone noted that the increasing budgets did not give a clear picture of how individual tax bills have increased (particular given income-sensitivity support from the state), Councilor Golonka expressed his concern that such state support should not be counted on, given the state's own budgetary volatility.

Councilor Weiss spoke out strongly against both proposed bonds, expressing his opinion that the city was too far in debt. Councilor Guerlain and City Manager Fraser briefly reviewed the bonding option for dealing with the city's infrastructure needs, versus a "pay as you go" option. Mayor Hollar referred to a memo authored by Councilor Guerlain reporting that the Capital Improvement Committee recommended the proposed bonding scheme, and suggested it was late in the process to reopen the discussion.

Councilor Golonka insisted that, contrary to the Mayor's statement that no Councilors had objected to the bonding proposal at the time, he did object at the time – but noted that he did not do so in a Council meeting. He then added that he was inclined – but not committed – to supporting these particular bonding proposals.

Councilor Guerlain reviewed the past Capital Improvement Committee discussions in more detail, clarifying his concerns, and adding that a change in direction at this time would not require a wholesale rewrite of the proposed budget, as the Mayor suggested it would.

Councilor Golonka suggested that the city could consider putting off moving on the infrastructure repair question another year, given the likelihood of a large budget request from the schools.

Councilor Weiss reminded the body that he had previously made clear his objection to any additional bonding.

Councilor Guerlain asked the City Manager about the implications of putting off the infrastructure bond decision for an additional year. Councilor Timpone noted that, in her experience, the Council continually has put off needed infrastructure improvements.

Mayor Hollar if there was a specific proposal to amend the draft budget. Councilor Guerlain indicated he was feeling somewhat reassured about the contents of the budget.

Councilor Golonka moved that the Council set the first public hearing for next week with the bond proposal as written to be included on the ballot pending public input. Councilor Hooper seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 8:10PM.

- 13-004. Councilor Weiss commended the Fire Department's response to the fire alarm in City Hall the previous week.

Councilor Hooper related that a lot of people were unhappy about the lack of First Night activities.

Councilor Timpone announced that she will not run for re-election to the Council.

13-006. The City Clerk reported that the City should be receiving two additional optical scan voting machines via the Secretary of State's office (through federal funds) in time for the annual city meeting. He indicated he would refrain from a formal announcement until the actual machines came into the city's possession.

13-007. City Manager Fraser noted that a grant had been received to overhaul police department consoles. He also referenced Councilor Weiss's commendation to the fire department on their response to the City Hall alarm, noting the false alarm was caused by insulation work underway that was authorized and paid for by a previous bond vote.

Councilor Guerlain made a motion to adjourn at 8:15PM. Councilor Timpone seconded. The motion passed unanimously.